

Wethersfield Parks and Recreation Advisory Board  
Minutes - Thursday, May 28, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Tom Ragonese. The meeting was held at Town Hall in the Town Manager's Conference Room. Members present were Tom Ragonese, Dan Silbo, Kevin Rogers, Rich Lepore, Carmelo Amoddio and Charlie Wood. Also present was Kathleen Bagley, Director of Parks and Recreation.

A. Public Comments.  
None.

B. Minutes - April 23, 2009.

Charlie Wood moved to approve the minutes of April 23, 2009. The motion was seconded by Rich Lepore and voted unanimously.

C. Monthly Report – April, 2009.

Chairperson Ragonese asked board members if they have any comments about the monthly report. He noted that this was a busy time for the Parks and Recreation Department, because of all the special events and activities happening in May and June. Rich Lepore commented on how nice the new windows look in the Banquet Room and Fireside Room at the Community Center. Ms. Bagley reported that the Heritage Trail Day held on April 25 was a big success. Maps of the Town's completed Bike Trail were distributed to over 200 people in attendance at this event. The Health District was able to print a trail guide of the bike trail and historic walks in Wethersfield. This trail guide was funded by a grant received from the Health District.

D. Letters and Announcements.

Chairperson Ragonese reported that the dedication for the new Little League Field will be held on June 6<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. Board members reported that they received their invitation to the ceremony in the mail today. The field opened for use by Little League on Tuesday, May 19. The first lighted game was held on Wednesday, May 20. Little League was ecstatic with the new field and were very protective of how they used the field. Chairperson Ragonese asked Ms. Bagley to send out publicity for this ceremony. She has sent news releases to the local papers and to the Town's cable access channel. Chairperson Ragonese was at the lighted game and reported that the field was a great place to be a spectator and watch the game. Little League gave him some suggestions for future improvements to the field including watching wear areas for the coaching boxes and outside the dugout entrances. Chairperson Ragonese reported that the press box is not yet built and the committee is awaiting the final redesign from the architect. Once this plan is received by staff, volunteers will build the press box. Materials for this press box have been donated to help keep the cost low for this project. If any funds remain in the Building Committee budget for this field, the second set of bleachers will be purchased. Chairperson Ragonese recognized the collaborative effort it took to build this field in less than ten months. He explained that funds were received from the State through Senator Doyle's efforts. The Town provided funding and donations were received from Little League, Men's Softball, Northeast Utilities and local residents. This project was truly a volunteer effort. Charlie Wood suggested sending a thank you note to the Wethersfield Life newspaper to recognize the efforts of these groups and individuals. Everyone thought this was a good idea and it will be done once the press box is built. Chairperson Ragonese was appreciative of the expertise of the Mill Woods Building Committee for overseeing this project. He reminded Board members that the Building Committee has not completed its work. They are still hoping to build the Soccer Field as soon as funds become available.

Charlie Wood asked Ms. Bagley to look at the rule signs in Mill Woods Park. He suggested having better directional signs and cleaning up the signs as you enter the Park. Ms. Bagley is aware of this issue and is working on cleaning up the signage in the Park.

E. Old Business.

1. Mill Woods Park Building Committee.

Chairperson Ragonese explained to Board Members that Little League has asked permission to use the lights on the new field on Saturday nights. This request was brought to the Building Committee, and they voted to approve it. The next step is for the Park Board to review it and make a determination on this request. Current park policy states that lights will not be on for softball games on Saturday and Sunday evenings. This policy was set up to be a good neighbor to abutting property owners. The lights for the new field are budgeted for five nights a week Monday through Friday evening to match the Men's Softball schedule. Little League has asked that they use the lights from Tuesday through Saturday night during the regular season and All-Star season. Board members had no problem with this request. Richard Lepore moved to approve the use of lights on the new Little League field in Mill Woods Park on Saturday during Little League's regular season and All-Star season. District games will be considered special events and can be on Saturday nights too. Use of lights must stay within budget. The motion was seconded by Kevin Rogers and voted unanimously.

2. 2009–10 Budget Report.

Chairperson Ragonese asked Ms. Bagley to give an update on the status of the budget for the upcoming year. She reported that the Town Council funded the last week of Willard Pool (\$5,769) and the utilities for the Nature Center (\$29,000). Also, the two part-time secretary positions in the department got back their five hours per week that were originally cut in the manager's budget. For Capital Improvements the Town Council funded parking lot improvements in Mill Woods Park (\$25,000), chimney repair at Community Center (\$25,000) and improvements to Greenfield softball field, Stillman baseball field and the High School baseball field (\$30,000).

F. New Business.

1. Fuller Housing Basketball Court.

Chairperson Ragonese reported that the hoops at the basketball court at Fuller housing were removed in May. This removal was done because the Town Manager received information from residents at Fuller housing who felt the individuals using the court were threatening their personal safety. Ms. Bagley distributed a copy of an e-mail received by the Town Manager identifying the residents' concerns. The Town Manager, Police Chief and Parks and Recreation Director concurred in removing these basketball hoops. The letter explained that the residents did not feel safe with the basketball court so close to the housing units.

2. Cove Docks and Boat Ramp.

Ms. Bagley explained that she is beginning the approval process from the Town Boards and Commissions for the design of new docks and boat ramp at Cove Park. In the fall of 2008, the Park Board held a public information meeting on this project and received input from residents. Taking all this information into account and discussing the plan with Town staff and the Harbor Masters, a minor change was made to the design. For periods of very high water, a portable ramp will be designed for installation. Ms. Bagley distributed a diagram of this portable ramp and cost estimates for the project. Carmelo Amoddio asked if funds were available for this project. Ms. Bagley reported that the approval process with the Town and also with the state DEP will take at least a year and then staff will look to get grant funds for this project. Board members have no problem with the change in the design. Ms. Bagley reported that both Harbor Masters had reviewed this design and approved it.

3. Liaison to the Keane Foundation.

Ms. Bagley reported that Mrs. Keane asked if a Board Member would be interested in serving as a liaison to the Keane Foundation Board, because of their partnership with the 9/11 Memorial Sports Center. Mrs. Keane is also interested in having one of her Board Members attend the Park Board meetings occasionally. Chairperson Ragonese asked if any Board Members were interested in volunteering for this position. Carmelo Amoddio expressed an interest in working with the Keane Foundation as a liaison from the Park Board. Ms. Bagley will contact Mrs. Keane and give her Mr. Amoddio's contact information. Chairperson Ragonese thanked Carmelo for his interest. Ms. Bagley reported that she will be sending Mrs. Keane a copy of the Park Board agenda for future meetings.

4. 375th Anniversary Celebration.

Ms. Bagley gave board members an overview on the upcoming events for this celebration. She reported that the anniversary committee is working on scheduling a fireworks display tentatively set for August 22 and the parade date is September 27.

5. Mayor's Show.

Chairperson Ragonese announced that he and Ms. Bagley will be appearing on the Mayor's show on Wednesday, June 3 to talk about the Parks and Recreation Department. .

6. Tour of Park Facilities.

Ms. Bagley asked Board Members when they would like to hold their tour of Park Facilities. In the past, they have done the tour in June, July and September. Board Members will look at the possibility of having it in July and will decide at their June meeting. Charlie Wood asked if their June meeting could be held at the 9/11 Memorial Sports Center. Chairperson Ragonese thought that was a good idea and they will meet there for the June meeting.

7. Wilkus Farm.

Carmelo Amoddio asked about the status of the Wilkus Farm, since the purchase of the property was approved by a Town referendum vote. Chairperson Ragonese reported that the Town Council has not yet decided on how to oversee the farm land. As soon as the Town Council determines the process, he will let Board Members know.

G. Motion to Adjourn.

A motion was made by Charlie Wood and seconded by Dan Silbo to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen A. Bagley, Director  
Parks & Recreation Department